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JURY CONVICTS MASSACHUSETTS WOMAN
OF IDENTITY THEFT CRIMES

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE – United States Attorney Tom Colantuono announced that a jury convicted **MARIE COLOKATHIS**, of 11 Russell Terrace, Newburyport, Massachusetts, of federal wire fraud, credit card fraud, conspiracy, and aggravated identity theft charges after a three day trial in the United States District Court for the District of New Hampshire.

On September 28, 2005, a federal grand jury returned a superceding indictment charging that between December 1999 and October of 2004, **COLOKATHIS**, aided and abetted by a co-defendant, Kelly Marino, committed wire fraud, credit card fraud, conspiracy, and aggravated identity theft in an ongoing scheme. The identity information, and especially the social security number of another Massachusetts woman, was used to fraudulently obtain energy services and credit cards which in turn were used on shopping sprees, some of which took place in New Hampshire. **COLOKATHIS** obtained the victim's identity information when her codefendant, Marino, found the victim's driver's license in a parking lot. The jury convicted **COLOKATHIS** of all four charges in the indictment.

The prosecution in federal district court in New Hampshire of **COLOKATHIS** resulted from the formation of the Identity Theft and Fraud Working Group organized in the U.S. Attorney's office, which brings together both federal and state law enforcement agencies to combat identity theft and fraud. An intensive and coordinated investigation by agents of the Newburyport, Massachusetts Police Department and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service resulted in **COLOKATHIS**'s apprehension.

U.S. Attorney Colantuono commended all agencies involved stating, "The vigilance of the Newburyport Massachusetts Police Department, which first began investigation of the fraud, followed by the joint efforts and outstanding cooperation among numerous federal and state agencies stands as a fine example of law enforcement work and professionalism at its best. This case should serve as a warning to anyone contemplating identity fraud that they will be detected, apprehended, and prosecuted."

COLOKATHIS is scheduled to be sentenced in U.S. District Court by Chief Judge Steven J. McAuliffe on April 4, 2006 at 10:00 A.M. She faces a maximum 20 year sentence on the wire fraud charge, and a maximum 10 year sentence on the credit card fraud and conspiracy charge. Under the federal "Aggravated Identity Theft" law, **COLOKATHIS** also faces a mandatory consecutive sentence of 2 years because she used the identity of another person in connection with the commission of the wire fraud and credit card fraud offenses.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Alfred Rubega.